

GOOD NEWS!

Second Report on The Evangelical Refugees in.
Harbin, Manchuria

THE GOAL



Russian Refugee Family of 1930 Starting Their Housekeeping on the Paraguayan "Chaco."

**The Last Lap of the Long Journey from the Banks
of the Volga to those of the Paraguay River will start
in February, 1932**

REPORT

BY THE CENTRAL BUREAU FOR RELIEF OF
THE EVANGELICAL CHURCHES OF EUROPE

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Treasurer: Edwin S. Kassing

A PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIAN REFUGEES AT HARBIN

Dear God, apart from whom all our plans and efforts are of no avail but with whom all things are possible, we pour out our hearts unto Thee on behalf of all peoples in danger, sorrow or suffering.



Thou art the confidence of all who trust in Thee; Thou art the refuge of all who are oppressed; Thou art the hope of all who go through great tribulations.



Hear the prayer of our faith, and answer us in the abundance of Thy lovingkindness through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Especially do we make petition for this people, forlorn and without a country, waiting and looking unto Thee in the troubled city of Harbin.



Bless those who have reached out a helping hand to their need.



Give wisdom, strength and patience to those who lead them through the wonders of the great deep to the welcoming land of Paraguay.



Be Thou unto each one a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night that they may journey with courage and hope and may arrive with peace at Thy appointed haven.



Hasten, O Lord, the day of brotherhood and peace, and give us all strength to endure to the end that all may know the joy of Thy salvation in Christ who loved us and gave himself for us. Amen.

THANKS WHERE THANKS ARE DUE

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

The Central Bureau for Relief and the denominational and other relief agencies with which it has been cooperating, acknowledge a debt of gratitude to

All those who gave sanctuary to the Christian refugees after their flight from Russia;

The Government of Paraguay which has generously opened its doors to receive them;

The religious and secular press which has helped us to spread the news about the situation at Harbin;

The congregations and church boards which arranged special collections for this relief action;

The Christian public who responded so magnanimously to our emergency appeal, from the generous woman who contributed \$3,000 to the Good Samaritan who sent a few two cent stamps with the comment: "I'll make good the postage you used on me anyhow";

A dozen or more Jewish contributors who gave substantial gifts to "rescue those oppressed for conscience' sake";

The Roman Catholic Mission at Sin Kiang, Kuldja, Thibet, which is sheltering fifty-five evangelical refugees whose plight has just become known.

"Lord, when saw we Thee in prison and delivered Thee not?"

THE GREAT TREK FROM HARBIN BEGINS:

Another fragment of the vast populations which were torn out of their age-old anchorages by the radical changes following in the wake of the world war, is going to find at last a place of settlement. The evangelical refugees who fled from Russia are leaving their temporary refuge at Harbin, Manchuria, to found new homes and communities in South America.

At the present writing, it is still doubtful whether the Lutheran contingent, about 400 strong, will go to join older Lutheran colonies in Brazil, or strike out for Australia, but the Mennonites and other evangelicals have definitely fixed upon Paraguay as their goal. The Nansen Refugee Commission will handle the transportation of both groups; the work of actual colonization will be carried out by the Lutheran and Mennonite authorities respectively.

The new ultimatum of General Tschan Sin Kuj, the military governor of Harbin, according to which the refugees must vacate the city by March 1, 1932, has done its share toward expediting the arrangements for the exodus. The first group will start early in February and unless unlooked-for hindrances arise, the last of this heroic little band of exiles should be on their way to the new world by the middle of the month.

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE REFUGEES

To the refugees at Harbin, after the dangers and privations of their flight across Asia, after months of waiting for a chance to find new homes, pent up in ramshackle and crowded barracks and other makeshift dwellings, beset with every ill that undernourishment and bad living conditions entail,—there comes at last a hope! The joy of knowing that they are finally to achieve the dreamed-of goal, will go a long way towards repairing the ravages of sickness and hunger, but every effort will be made to get them into as good physical condition as possible before they start for South America. Pioneering is no enterprise for feeble, worn out people.

The success of the earlier Mennonite settlements on the Chaco, and of the Lutheran colonies in Brazil, is a fine testimony to the stamina, energy and faith of the settlers. Neither the "Matto Grosso" of Brazil nor the "Chaco" of Paraguay are suitable places for shirkers, nor for believers in the five-day week and five-hour day!

THE "CHACO"

A word concerning the future home of the Mennonite refugees will interest many who have befriended them; more particularly, we should like to answer the natural question: "Why Paraguay?", when Mexico was also available and so much nearer.

First of all, careful investigation revealed that the cost of colonization in Mexico would be greater than in Paraguay.

Second, the investigator who was sent down to look over the earlier Mennonite settlements in Paraguay reported that, while they were meeting the



THE BEGINNING

*of the great migration
of Russian Evangelicals,
1929.*

*Huddled groups of
exiles at the railroad
station in Moscow.*

THE END

of the long trail

Russian Mennonite family
in their wilderness home on
the "Chaco", 1930. Substan-
tial houses have already re-
placed these first rude shelters.

Note the faithful "Bottle
Tree," which stands like a
sturdy sentinel before the tent. The fibrous interior of this gigantic gourd
furnishes kapok for mattresses; the hard rind furnishes buckets, trays, basins,
washtubs, etc. The family shown in the picture on the cover is using a "bottle
tree" as a cupboard.



difficulties normal to pioneer life, they were doing very well and would soon be independent of further support from the home boards. Each family has several acres of land under cultivation, some livestock, the beginnings of an orchard, and in every case a decent house to live in. Each of the twelve villages has its schoolhouse, and there is already one "higher school" supplying more advanced vocational training as well as additional academic instruction. The spiritual and cultural life of the village centers around its little church. All this, in the second year "up from the wilderness", is a remarkable record. Of course, during the first half year at least, all food was supplied by the Central Mennonite Relief Committee which also helped to supply the irreducible minimum of equipment, tools, etc., to fit out the settlers who had lost everything when they left Russia in 1929.

The charter granted by the Paraguayan government was extremely liberal. No other country in the world would have given such favorable terms. These are a few of the provisions:

- freedom to worship as they please

- the colonists are free to retain their own language in schools and public affairs

- local government is left in the hands of the settlers

- even the sick and feeble belonging to the settlers may accompany them,—on the responsibility of the settlers and their supporters,—whereas most countries refuse admission in such cases

The land chosen for colonization is owned by an American company which has granted very favorable credits on the price of the real estate and building materials.

The presence of the previous colonies (12 Russian Mennonite villages and 15 Canadian Mennonite villages) also helped to influence the decision materially. Here the new immigrants will be among friends and receive the benefits of their experience. In fact, plots cleared for houses, tents and sheds will await the wearied refugees when they arrive.

The "Chaco" is a name common to any of the great South American prairie lands. There is a Paraguayan "Chaco", an Argentinian one, and a Bolivian one. A similar area in Brazil is known as "Matto Grosso."

In Paraguay the "Chaco" lies to the west of the Paraguay River. To reach it one travels by boat up the great stream to Puerto Casado, then inland by a single-gauge railway which penetrates only a short distance as yet, but which is being extended. From the end of the line it is three or four days by the "covered wagon" route to the colonies. A new automobile road is under construction.

The country is almost flat, with gentle undulations and alternating stretches of open woods and grassland. While the fringe of the "Chaco" is suited only to grazing, the interior is fertile and is producing good crops. The ground water is saline, a fact which does not seem to annoy the cattle at all. Sweet water wells are secured by digging to a depth of 100 feet or less.

The climate is remarkably healthy. There are none of the fevers which we associate with the tropics. The hot season is HOT, but the heat is not enervating. The immigrants even from cold countries readily become accustomed to it. The altitude is about 500 feet above sea level. Mosquitoes and other noxious insects, with the exception of ants, are not prevalent.

Crops include cotton, peanuts, beans, chick peas, maize, "Kafir" (a kind of sorghum), yams, madioca, wheat, oranges, dates, olives, soy beans, pyrethrum, various fruits and numerous medicinal plants as well as valuable fodder grasses. Herefords, pigs, poultry (including turkeys) and bees thrive in this country. The ground is light and readily tillable, free from stones and well drained.

The colonists in this region have a good friend in Don José Casado, the head of the *Compania de Tierras C. Casado*, which owns large adjoining territories in the "Chaco", fine herds of cattle, and most of the transportation facilities on the river. Its liberal policy regarding freight rates has aided the settlers and redounded to the company's benefit.

Anyone who reads German and is interested in learning more about the "Chaco", much of which is unknown even to the Paraguayans, will find valuable and interesting information in the monograph of Dr. Kempfski, "*Die Landwirtschaft in Paraguayischen Chaco*", published by "Mercur", Paseo Colon, 389, Buenos Aires, Argentina, \$1.50. The monograph is illustrated, indexed, and carries a fine bibliography as well.

SPECIAL NOTICE:

Our office has decided to put on a final appeal for the Harbin refugees in an effort to raise \$2,500 over and above the \$10,000 originally pledged by our Bureau. This is due to two unforeseen developments, viz: 1. the Nansen Refugee Commission will not be able to assume as large a share of the transportation expenses as was hoped for; 2. the Lutheran group, which according to our first report would be taken care of entirely by the Lutheran relief agency, has asked to share in the general relief funds as well as in the facilities offered by the Nansen Refugee Commission. It was the hope of the Lutheran authorities to keep their people in Harbin until they could be moved gradually, a few families at a time, to Canada. The renewed ultimatum of the military governor has upset this plan completely.

We are therefore sending out several thousand appeal letters during January and early in February. If by inadvertence one of these letters reaches the church or individual that has already made a contribution for this emergency, it would help us to have the envelope in which the letter was mailed, returned to us so that we can correct our lists. As stated in Bulletin No. 9, our one-woman secretarial and clerical force cannot always check new lists as fast as they are needed.

To former friends who have not renewed their gifts during 1931, this presents an opportunity to share in a project for whose successful accomplishment the Christian world will yet be grateful.

GIVING OUT THE "RESPONSES"

The subheading under "Thanks Where Thanks Are Due", sounds a little bit as if the Central Bureau were breaking out in paeans of praise to its own glory, simply because,—after months of work,—the quota accepted as the share of our office in the rescue of the Harbin refugees was finally raised. Such was not our intention. In comparison with the sums raised by the Mennonites and Lutherans the amount contributed by our Bureau, representing all the rest of Protestantism, as it were, is very moderate indeed. None the less, 21 denominations are represented in the total of \$10,937.76 received to date. (January 8, 1932). Every state in the union is represented, and so are Mexico, Canada, and South Africa.

Of the many sacrificial gifts that reached our office, none was more touching than that made by a young woman who decided to forego an engagement ring in order to make a substantial contribution to this and other calls upon her charity. A "Kentucky Mountaineer" chipped in a dollar which should carry with it a hundredfold blessing. Then there was the \$500 gift which "set the ball rolling" again after it seemed to be stuck at the \$6,500 mark.

Many friends of the Central Bureau who had already done their share for the year, sent additional contributions on receiving the first Harbin Report.*

*Copies are still available; sent free on request.

SUMMARY OF FUNDS DISBURSED FOR RUSSIAN CHRISTIAN RELIEF

Harbin—Sent to Harbin for maintenance of refugees:

Through American Consul, May, 1931	\$1,000
August	500

Through German Consul, August	500	
Through German Consul, November.....	1,000	\$ 2,500

For transportation and colonization, via Nansen Refugee Commission, January 16, 1932.....	\$10.000
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For relief of evangelicals in Russia.....	2,350
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For Relief of Evangelicals in Russia.....	2,350
For Mennonite families recently colonized in Canada.....	200

\$15,050

Being held toward extra \$2,500 for Lutheran refugees, to date as
of January 21st..... \$ 1,208